

LENTILS & RICE (mujadara-ruz) WITH ONIONS

INGREDIENTS:

1/2 cup long grain white rice
2 3/4 cups water
1 cup green lentils
1 tsp salt or to taste

DIRECTIONS:

1. In a deep saucepan, bring to a rolling boil enough water to cover the rice. Dump rice in water, cover and REMOVE pan from heat.
2. Soak rice for about 10 minutes.
3. Wash lentils in a sieve.
4. Dump rice into a sieve and shake out excess water.
5. Put 2 3/4 - 3 cups water in the saucepan, add rice and lentils. At the first signs of boiling, reduce heat to low, cover and cook until nearly done or completely done.

Optional

5. Add onion mixture (instructions below) and continue cooking until all ingredients are soft. Serve or allow to cool and put in containers for later.

TIPS:

The traditional Lebanese way to make this is with heavily caramelized (burned) onions. Half of them you prepare you will use for garnish and the other half will be incorporated into the lentils and rice.

If you wish to make it this way, here is the procedure, but I caution you, it will smell up your house, so I suggest you close any doors to areas where clothing is kept otherwise you will be doing a LOT of laundry!! If you have a gas grill, it would best if you could do this outside, assuming the grill will get hot enough.

Also, you will want to do this process BEFORE you start the lentils and rice as it takes about 45 - 60 minutes to cook the onions down.

You will need:

3 large white or yellow onions, slivered (aka fajita-style cut)
1/4 cup olive or vegetable oil
salt to taste

In a LARGE skillet, with the burner set at about 75-85% heat (almost high) cook the onions down until they are all black. Yes, they will all be black - there shouldn't be any, or VERY LITTLE, white showing, if any. Some of the onions will be crisp. Yes, they will start to smoke in the skillet and may set off your smoke detector. This many onions will cook down to about 2 cups worth, if that. It's a lot of hot, smelly work, for very little return.

Working quickly:

Once you've finished, reduce the heat to a little less than half and remove about 1/2 to 3/4 of the onions to a paper towel-lined cookie sheet.

Add about 1/2 to 1 cup water to remaining onions in skillet and bring to a simmer. While waiting, blot the other onions dry with another paper towel(s).

Once the water has started to simmer, take a potato masher and mash the onions down into a paste. You will probably need a spoon, butter knife or spatula to scrap off the bottom of the masher each time you mash the onions.

Maybe add a pinch of salt and continue cooking until all are mashed up well.

Add this mixture to the lentils and rice and continue cooking until all liquid is absorbed and all ingredients are soft.

Add more water if necessary.

Serve hot or cold topped with reserved, caramelized onions.

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